



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA ADMINISTRATOR ANNOUNCES NEW ON-LINE BUSINESS COURSES FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

WASHINGTON – Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration today announced a new on-line education resource for training current and aspiring entrepreneurs.

The new SBA *Small Business Classroom*, which is the first of its kind, uses the latest technology to bring easy-to-use, electronic business courses to anyone with a standard Internet connection, 24-hours-a-day. The SBA Small Business Classroom provides interactive, easily accessible business courses on the topics most in demand by small business clients.

Administrator Alvarez unveiled the new program today during Vice President Al Gore's "National Summit on 21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs," being held in Washington today. Vice President Gore and Administrator Alvarez met with more than 300 leaders from business, education, labor and government to discuss how American workers can get the skills they need to succeed, and employers can get the skilled personnel they need to stay competitive.

"America's competitiveness and the prosperity of our people in a changing economy depend increasingly on high-skill, high-wage jobs," Vice President Gore said. "Realizing our potential will require investing in education and learning for all our people throughout their lifetimes."

Echoing the vice president's sentiments on education, Administrator Alvarez said, "**Our new Small Business Classroom is designed to meet the business education and information needs of the 21st century aspiring entrepreneur. This bold and innovative tool can be used to empower men and women to thrive in an ever-changing economic landscape by opening the doors of economic independence through business ownership.**"

The SBA Small Business Classroom's on-line courses are short (7 to 30 minutes), self-paced, learning modules formatted into easy-to-follow learning templates. The content of each course is enhanced with graphics, audio, and numerous electronic links to other small business learning resources. Certain courses will be offered in both Spanish and English. Current class offerings include:

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- *Are You Y2K OK?* -- provides information and instruction on dealing with the Y2K computer issue.
- *The Business Plan* -- comprehensive course on how to prepare an effective business plan; profiles each component in detail and includes additional resources.
- *How to Raise Capital for a Small Business* -- provides instruction on how to prepare a loan proposal, how banks review financial requests and information on SBA's financial assistance programs.

The SBA also plans to include more courses on financial assistance, marketing, and how to do business with the federal government in the near future. Additional components of the SBA Small Business Classroom include on-line counseling with SCORE volunteers, a library and a Course Evaluation & Comments Forum.

The SBA Small Business Classroom is accessible through the agency's Web site at **www.sba.gov**.

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The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

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